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SIPDIS
S/GC FOR DANIEL FRIED AND MICHAEL WILLIAMS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/08/03
TAGS: PREL PGOV KDRG EN
SUBJECT: Estonia Likely to Accept Gitmo Detainee(s)

CLASSIFIED BY: Karen Decker, CDA; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

Classified by CDA Karen Decker for reasons 1.4 B & D.

¶11. (C) Summary and Comment: In a meeting with the Estonian Foreign Minister Paet on July 29 in Tallinn, Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure, Ambassador Daniel Fried, requested the Estonian government consider receiving detainees currently held at Guantanamo, who the U.S. government cannot return to their country of origin because of post-transfer treatment concerns, for resettlement in Estonia. The FM noted the GOE's willingness to help pending the resolution of several questions and further internal discussion. In a meeting the next day, President Ilves reinforced the GOE's willingness to help. (In the two days after the meeting the GOE moved quickly to begin staffing this request and looking into sending a delegation to Guantanamo to interview detainees. The Cabinet is currently scheduled to make a decision on 1 September. Given the fact that a majority of Estonian officials are on leave during August, the GOE is moving expeditiously. Post believes that Estonia will agree to accept at least one, and possibly two, detainees for resettlement.) End summary and comment.

¶12. (C) Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure, Ambassador Daniel Fried, met with FM Urmas Paet in Tallinn July 29 to discuss the GOE's willingness to resettle one or more Guantanamo detainees in Estonia. Also present at the meeting were MFA Secretary General Marten Kokk, Political Director Clyde Kull, MFA Security Policy Director Paul Teesalu, and desk officer Anneli Poolakese. Charge Karen Decker accompanied on the American side. During the meeting Fried passed over the files of three detainees for the GOE to review and consider. Paet explained that Estonia would like to help and is ready to discuss accepting a specific "person or persons." However, he had several questions. Paet asked about Estonia's responsibility to keep any detainee within Estonia, particularly given Estonia's membership in the Schengen zone. Paet stressed that any detainee must want to come live in Estonia. He further asked what USG interest would remain in these detainees after their resettlement, and lastly stated that Estonia could not accept anyone whose nationality would cause political problems for Estonia. For that reason Estonia would not be ready to accept any Uighurs.

¶13. (C) In response, Fried suggested the GOE discuss the Schengen situation with France and Portugal specifically, as France had already resettled one detainee in May and Portugal is making preparations to receive two detainees in the near future. Both countries have or are taking steps to prohibit the resettled detainees from traveling abroad immediately. The USG does not expect Estonia to close its borders, Fried stressed, but would prefer the detainee be kept in-country. Fried also explained that any resettlement would be voluntary, and any detainee the GOE agrees to receive would have to agree to live in Estonia. Fried explained that an Estonian delegation is welcome to travel to

Guantanamo from Washington, DC to interview detainees it is considering before making a final decision. Additionally, Fried outlined the USG's assistance in the resettlement process, specifically in providing up to \$85,000 per detainee for actual costs incurred by the GOE for the resettled detainee's housing and living expenses. Fried also noted that the UNHCR was willing to provide a statement of support to the GOE if it would help in its decision-making process. As to U.S. interest post-transfer, Fried stated that there would be no legal interest (e.g., prosecution), but that the USG would appreciate the GOE security services keeping in touch through liaison channels on measures they take in regard to the detainee(s).

¶4. (C) Paet mentioned hostility from China towards countries accepting Uighurs, and asked if any other countries had reacted in a similar fashion. Fried said that to date, only China and Tunisia have actively tried to discourage countries from accepting their citizens.

¶5. (C) Concluding the meeting, Paet told Fried he would brief the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. Ultimately, a decision by the full Cabinet would need to be taken (now scheduled for September 1). At that point the GOE may want to start talking to the press to create public acceptance.

¶6. (C) In a separate meeting on July 30, President Ilves told Fried that he had spoken with Paet, and that the GOE is willing to help the USG by receiving Guantanamo detainees. Ilves cautioned, however, that the matter still needed to go before the Cabinet. [Comment: The President holds little real power, but as a senior member of the opposition and a popular public figure his support will make Estonian agreement to accept one or more detainees much more likely. End comment.] Ilves also asked how membership in Schengen affects resettling detainees. He added that Estonia is close to passing legislation allowing law enforcement to use radio-emitting ankle bracelets to track convicted criminals, as an alternative to prison, and wondered if this would be possible for the detainees. Fried said that such arrangements are up to the host country, as once a detainee is transferred, he becomes subject to the receiving government's laws. Fried also explained that the GOE, as was done by the French in receiving a Guantanamo detainee in May, might look into issuing a national visa as opposed to a Schengen visa for detainees it receives. Therefore, if a detainee attempted to travel outside of Estonia, he would subject himself to possible prosecution under Estonian law.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: On July 31, MFA Political Director Kull told CDA that the MFA had passed the three case files to the MOI for review. While the MFA was ready to bring this request before the Cabinet in August, MOI requested a month to evaluate the security situation regarding these detainees. Therefore, the GOE is scheduled to bring this question before the Cabinet for decision on 1 September. Prior to that date, the GOE intends to send a delegation to Guantanamo to interview potential cases. Post is working with the GOE and S/GC on logistics.

¶8. (U) This cable has been cleared by Ambassador Fried's office.
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